THE ROBERT BROWNING CENTENARY CELEBRATION

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The Robert Browning centenary celebration at Westminster abbey, May

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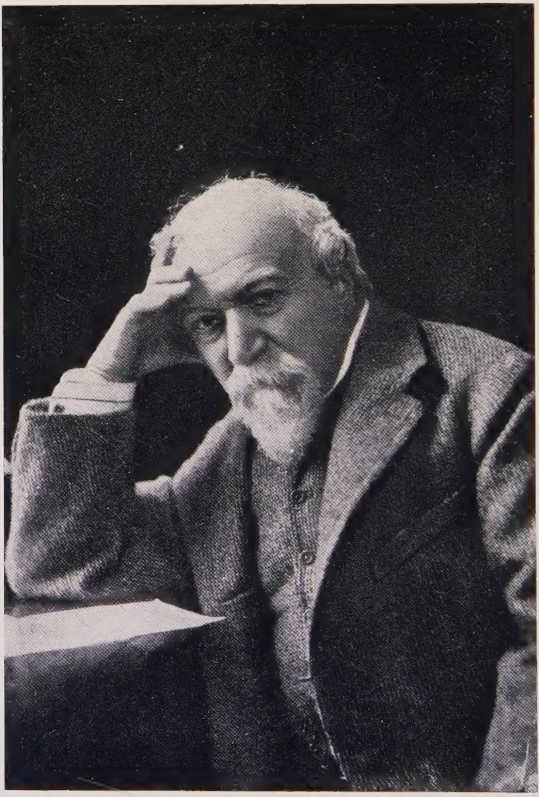
The Robert Browning Centenary Celebration



ROBERT BROWNING

(AGED 77)

From a photograph by W. H. Grove, 1889
the last taken in England

The Robert Browning Centenary Celebration

At Westminster Abbey

May 7th, 1912

EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND APPENDICES

BY

PROFESSOR KNIGHT

WITH A PORTRAIT

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Introduction

Some years ago it occurred to me as "a fit and proper thing" that the sorrowing friends of our great English poet, Robert Browning, should commemorate the centenary of his birth within the Abbey where he is buried.

After thinking it over, I corresponded with several persons younger than myself, who knew the poet more or less familiarly; as I thought they might be able to carry out a project which involved a good deal of organisation, better than myself. As it was impossible, however, to find any one able to do so, I have tried to realise it.

My only warrant was a somewhat intimate knowledge of the poet, and my correspondence with him, published in the first volume of my *Retrospects*,[1] our varied meetings at 19 Warwick Crescent, and walks thence

[1] Some eighteen of his letters to me are printed, pp. 22 and 95.

with him on Sunday afternoons through Kensington Gardens, to call on old Mrs. Procter at Albert Mansions (to whom he used to go to read his poems), my numerous lectures on him, and public readings from him, both in this country and in American Universities, and my being asked to be a pall-bearer at his burial in Westminster.

From my boyhood I have felt that he and Tennyson were together the greatest of our English poets since Wordsworth died; and as it fell to me to have something to do with the securing of Dove Cottage for the nation, and afterwards helping to fill it with memorials of its most illustrious occupant; subsequently assisting to obtain for posterity the home at Nether Stowey in Somerset, where Coleridge lived and did his best poetic work, I was more than glad to aid in this centenary celebration of one equally great among the teacher-poets of the world.

After correspondence with those mentioned in it, the following preliminary letter was sent out by me to some who knew Browning, or had written about him :—

Private and Confidential.]

GRETA LODGE, KESWICK,
October 1911.

I am trying to organise a Browning Centenary Celebration for the 7th of May 1912, at Westminster Abbey, where he is buried beside Tennyson.

The Dean of the Abbey, with the Headmaster of its School, have together granted the use of the Abbey and their College Hall for this purpose, from 3 to 5 o'clock on the Centenary Day; just as the late Dean Bradley granted it, and the Jerusalem Chamber, for two meetings of "The Wordsworth Society," when in 1883 Matthew Arnold, and in 1886 the late Lord Selborne presided over it.

Lord Crewe, who is a Man of Letters as well as a Statesman, and whose lines on Browning occur in his *Stray Verses* of 1889, has been asked to preside on this occasion.

It has been thought better—during the few hours of the celebration—to have from ten to twelve brief (ten-minute) speeches or addresses, rather than three to four longer orations on the poet; and the following persons have

been asked to speak, viz.: the Bishop of Ripon, Mr. A. C. Benson (Cambridge), Mr. J. W. Mackail (Oxford), Sir Oliver Lodge (Birmingham), the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. William Watson (the poet), Professor Edward Dowden (Dublin), Mr. W. L. Courtney, Mr. F. Harrison, the Rev. Stopford Brooke, and Professor Henry Laurie (Melbourne). It is too early to publish a complete list of those who will take part in the celebration; but, if any of those named are unable to speak, others will easily be found.

A committee of sympathisers with the proposal is also needed—at least some fifty to a hundred representative men and women—who understand the greatness of Britain's and the world's debt to the many-sided genius of Browning.

Will you join this committee? and allow your name to be included with others as a sympathiser? No financial or other responsibility is involved in joining it.

Kindly reply to

PROFESSOR KNIGHT,

GRETA LODGE, KESWICK.

Some of those who have written on the poet did not reply to this letter. They were probably out of Britain, and did not receive it by post. But so many answered it, with enthusiastic sympathy and zeal, that steps were at once taken to carry out the proposal. The Dean of Westminster, appealed to by Canon Rawnsley and several others, cordially gave permission, so far as the Abbey was concerned; and Dr. Gow, the headmaster of its school, along with the Dean, granted the use of its College Hall for the meeting to follow the afternoon Service. It was arranged by the Dean that the passage from Browning's poem *Saul*, ending with the words, "See the Christ stand," should be set to music by Sir Hubert Parry, and sung during that Service; also that the music to the poem by Mrs. Browning, *He giveth his Beloved Sleep*—which was composed by the Abbey organist, Sir Frederick Bridge, and sung at the poet's burial twenty-two years ago—should be repeated on this occasion.

Any one may attend the Service, and no card of admission is required. At four o'clock an adjournment will be made to the College Hall, when the Marquis of Crewe will pre-

side; and, after some introductory remarks, will call upon Bishop Boyd Carpenter, late of the Diocese of Ripon, who will speak on "The Oral Interpretation of Browning." Canon Rawnsley of Carlisle and Crosthwaite will then read four stanzas which he wrote lately on Browning's Grave, following them with part of *The Poet's Home-Going*, which he composed after his death, on the removal of his remains to England. Miss Emily Hickey, one of the founders of the Browning Society, will then read a paper entitled "Browning on Failure," suggested by the phrase in the Epilogue to *Asolando*, "We fall to rise." Afterwards Mr. Ernest Coleridge, grandson of S. T. Coleridge, will read on "Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*, compared with those of Browning." Mr. H. C. Minchin, the latest biographer of the poet, will then read on "Browning as a Letter-writer," and Mr. William Kingsland on "Browning as I knew Him." This paper will be followed by one from the late Master of Downing College, Cambridge, Dr. Hill, on "*The Ring and the Book*," and another by Professor Henry Laurie, of the University of

Melbourne, entitled, "An Australian Appreciation of Browning."

In an appendix will be found a list of those men and women from Britain, America, and the Continent of Europe, who have responded to the invitation to join the "committee of sympathisers" with the centenary celebration of the poet. It includes Men of Letters and of Science, Artists, Actors, Lawyers, Judges, Diplomatists, Statesmen, Ecclesiastics of all denominations, our two Archbishops, more than twenty Anglican Bishops, Nonconformists throughout England and Scotland, with members and officials of the Roman Catholic Church, heads of Houses in Oxford Cambridge and elsewhere; University professors in England and Scotland, peers and peasants, working men and working women, numerous admirers in America, also Italian and Colonial representatives.

I may add that more than one thousand letters have reached me from our own and other lands as to this centenary celebration, many of them containing wonderful though brief tributes to the poet. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of them is their

many-sidedness; and it is questionable if any other English poet has appealed to so many different types of character, and awakened sympathy with so many workers, both in broad pathways and in narrow tracks.

It has fallen to me to select not only the subjects to be dealt with in these brief centenary speeches, but also the writers to whom they have been handed over. They have all responded most cordially.

I need scarcely add that, within the past decade, Browning literature—*i.e.* books devoted to the story of his life, criticism of his work, and appreciation of his genius—have increased more rapidly than in the case of any other poet, not excepting his great predecessors, Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and Tennyson.

Thanks are due to Mr. Stead, the warden of the Browning Settlement at Walworth, for his very interesting paper on the history and work of that organisation. They are also due to Mr. Walter Crane, for designing the card of admission to this celebration, which he has presented to us. W. K.

The Oral Interpretation of Browning

May I take as my text an incident in the story of the French Academy?

At one of the ordinary séances of the Academy, M. Legouvé said that in the opening lines of one of La Fontaine's poems he could praise two lines as good, while he regarded six lines as detestable. M. Cousin looked at the speaker in wrath. At the close of the sitting M. Cousin joined M. Legouvé and with decision asked him, "Is it possible that you pretend to understand La Fontaine better than I do?" "Without any doubt," said M. Legouvé. "Indeed!" said M. Cousin in astonishment. "Yes, indeed," was the reply; "and that for a very good reason, viz. that you read La Fontaine to yourself, and I read him aloud." In other words, M. Legouvé claimed that his appreciation and understanding of La Fontaine gained in

fullness and force by the habit of reading him aloud.[1] As to each of us is assigned to-day the duty—a welcome duty—of paying some tribute to the genius of Browning, I venture to plead for a practice which will add, I believe, to our appreciation of his powers. I plead that we shall understand his poems better, and regard them with a more intelligent admiration, if we would not merely read them, but read them aloud.

I believe that this is true of all poetry. If when we read alone and in silence we are moved to admiration, or feel our emotions deeply stirred, how much more vivid are our impressions when the words which moved us are interpreted by the living voice. Then the ear adds powerful witness to what the eye has reported. Indeed, if we reflect, is it not to the ear rather than to the eye that the poet appeals? Else what is the significance of metre, accent, rhythm and rhyme, if they are not meant to be musical measures of which the ear is the true arbiter? The very way in which we print the lines and stanzas of a poem are after all only mechanical means designed to convey to the eye what

[1] *L'art. de la Lecture Legouvé*, pp. 126–128.

would appeal to the ear without any such artifice. The original appeal of poetry is to the ear, and the force of it is doubled when it is heard.

It was the recognition of this fact which made M. Legouvé confident that in the appreciation of La Fontaine he possessed a definite advantage over M. Cousin, because he had not been content to be a silent reader; he had sought to interpret by voice as well as eye.

When we realise this, we shall understand those who say that no adequate criticism of poetry is possible to one whose only knowledge of the poet is through the eye. "A good reader," said Ste. Beuve, "is a good critic; reading aloud gives to us a power of analysis which silent reading can never know."[1] This power of analysis increases critical capacity, and adds therefore to the force of intelligent admiration.

But here I expect an objection. It may be said that all that I have said is true enough in a general way; but that it is unfortunate that it should be put forward when Browning is the poet we have met to honour. I shall

[1] *Legouvé*, p. 88.

be told that it is true enough that the music of verse appeals to us most powerfully through the ear; but that this applies mainly to those poets who were masters of harmony, and whose verses therefore speak both vigorously to our thoughts and melodiously to our ears; but that Browning does not belong to these. Advance this plea when we are speaking of Milton, of Shelley, of Tennyson, of Swinburne, but not when we have Browning in our thoughts; for, with all his gifts, Browning cannot be placed among that illustrious brotherhood who breathed out high themes in sweet melodious verse. His lines may be *vera*, *nobilia*, but can we as a rule concede them the other Horatian epithet and call them *dulcia*? I admit the criticism: Browning does not belong to that high choir of lofty spirits who sing and "singing in their glory move." I admit the criticism; but I do not admit the inference. Browning did not sing as Tennyson sang: musical values were less to him than the thought he strove to utter; but, nevertheless, Browning possesses qualities which can best —I had almost said can only—be appreciated when his works are read aloud. Certainly

many of his powers assume a significance, and reveal a force, which can hardly be appreciated if they are read in silence.

May I venture on a personal experience in illustration? In common with many, I felt for a long time that Browning was to me a fountain sealed: the feeling that he was obscure possessed my mind: such attempts as I made to enter intelligently into the spirit and thought of his more characteristic works ended in defeat. His lighter and more popular poems — such as *Saul* and say *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*—presented no difficulty; but these gave no adequate conception of Browning's genius: to appreciate that genius the other and more distinctive works must be attacked: but how to begin the attack! I could point to passages which seemed to defy the key of grammar to unlock their meaning; and yet the force of Browning was unquestionable, if I only could find some means to charm away his apparent and repellent obscurity. At length one evening an impulse took me, and I began—not knowing what would come of it—to read one poem aloud. Immediately light sprang out of obscurity: the scales fell

from my eyes: the obscure became intelligible, clear, charged with vivid meaning. I perceived what I may call the concealed dramatic element: like Geryon it came to the surface, conjured into form by the speaking voice. It was not in my case a deliberate experiment; it was an accidental discovery. I had no purpose, or conscious purpose, in submitting the poem—I think it was *The Bishop orders his Tomb*—to such a test, but the joy of the discovery was the gateway of further knowledge, understanding, and delight. The intense human, intellectual vitality of the poet became clear to me. Browning possessed a wonderful gift of identifying himself in thought and feeling with the people of whom he sang: he could so keenly enter into the emotions, scruples, and aspirations of his subjects that his obscurity was largely due to his intimacy with feelings which it did not occur to him stood in need of explanation to the reader.

In a special way, he possessed the qualification of a poet as laid down by Keats when he said that the poet was one who could so identify himself with all nature, with all passions and instincts, as to become their interpreter.

> "He hath heard
> The lion roaring, and can tell
> What his horny throat expresseth,
> And to him the tiger's yell
> Comes articulate, and presseth
> On his ear like mother tongue."

This gift may well produce some obscurity of expression: for not every instinct or passion which demands expression, and with which for the time the poet has identified himself, can be clothed in a form which will be immediately apprehended by the reader; seeing that some of the emotions may lie outside the range of his experience and his powers of self-identification. Hence it follows that obscurity may be due to the poet's intensity of sympathetic feelings with the emotions he seeks to delineate. The mere sight of the poet's descriptive words will not carry us into the enchanted land; but a voice may transport us there; and this is especially true when the emotions and feelings expressed are those which appeal usually to the ear rather than to the eye. The same sentence may convey different meanings according to the vibrations of the voice: we hear the indignant feelings which the very courtesy

of the words seeks to conceal ; we catch the inflections of irony, the tones of gentle badinage, the suggestions of unappeasable discontent in the tones of the speaker. Similarly the reader becomes an interpreter of the poet to those who hear : he becomes an interpreter also to himself ; for in the very effort to convey the poet's thought by the speaking voice he detects—perhaps by his very failures—the true but overlooked significance of the lines he reads. In such an experiment we are recalled to a truth which is often overlooked : we are reminded that for some emotions sound is a more fitting medium of expression than sight. By reading aloud we may be able to evoke in ourselves the feeling which is needful for a due understanding of the poet, for by using the voice we are putting ourselves more within the atmosphere of sympathy in which the poem was written.

You may agree with me or not in this line of thought ; but as a matter of experience I felt, as I began to read Browning aloud, that I had reached a medium in which the poem became articulate to me.

I think that as a practical fact such poem as *Holy Day*, or *The Soliloquy of the*

Spanish Cloister, or *The Bishop orders his Tomb* gain much in vividness when the voice is employed as well as the eye. To enter into their meaning, you must — as Browning did—identify yourself for instance with the envious, grudging, querulous monk in the garden, if you would follow his words; you must feel the keen resentments which the monk expresses; you must feel the emotions generated in narrow surroundings, if you would understand the half-contemptuous, half-envious hate of the favoured brother, whose successful piety appears to you only an astute capacity for getting the best things to be had in the lean, unadventurous existence within the straitened monotony of the monastery walls. Then you will realise the dramatic situation, when the vesper bell interrupts the soliloquy :—

> "'St, there's vespers! Plena gratiâ
> Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r- you swine."

Similarly, when reading *The Bishop orders his Tomb*, we must transport ourselves into the Bishop's character-chamber. We must realise with what patient and secret care he has provided for his posthumous glorification;

we must feel the eager anticipation with which he pictures the splendour of his sumptuous tomb, outshining "old Gaudolf's paltry onion-stone," his self-congratulatory pleasure in his choice Latin epitaph, "picked phrase, Tully's every word," his whimsical, petulant, pathetic doubt of the good faith of his heirs, his furtive suspicion of their whispers round his bedside.

> "I know
> Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
> Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah! ye hope
> To revel down my villas while I gasp
> Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
> Which Gaudolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
> Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
> 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to."

And lastly our imaginative sympathy must share his unappeasable self-satisfaction as he composes his limbs to resemble his own effigy lying beneath its nine-pillared canopy, and as his frail fingers struggle to make the bedclothes drop into great laps and folds like sculptor's work, and then folds his arms in fancy as though clasping his crook. We must feel all that this worldly-minded, classic-spirited æsthete feels: we must feel the incongruous blending in his thoughts of the

vanity of life and the pride of posthumous glory. We must be able to follow the mechanical gropings of his sub-conscious mind, when he murmurs with a pitiful lack of living interest, some trite saying on the swift passing of life,

> "As a weaver's shuttle pass our years,
> Man goeth to the grave and where is he?"

and understand at the same time his nervous eagerness to secure, by bribe or coaxing, the sumptuousness of his own sepulchre. In the play of these emotions there is dramatic force which needs the interpretation of the living voice. Poetry is meant to be heard: new meanings leap into life when to the lay of the poet is added the beauty of the voice; and Browning, no less than other poets, will be more and better understood, if we will but take the trouble to read him aloud.

W. Boyd Carpenter.

At Browning's Grave

7th May 1912

Come forth ye great immortals from your sleep,
And swell to-day our glad memorial throng,
Ye sowed the golden seed of thought, we reap
Your deathless fruit of song.

Come not as victors with the flash of swords,
Nor clad in war's impenetrable mail,
But crowned with laurel, armed with fiery words,
Whose music shall not fail.

Leave your fair halls of melody and psalm,
To join in honour to our spirit-guest
—The man who taught us Right must bear the palm,
And Love in Heaven find rest.

Therefore to-day, in this most holy place,
Where still the harps that helped the ages ring,
We thank the Eternal Father for his grace,
Who bade the prophet sing.

H. D. Rawnsley.

The Poet's Home-Going

"I shall soon depart for Venice on my way homeward."[1]

His heart was where the summer ever shines,
  He saw the English swallow eastward come,
And still among the olives and the vines,
Or underneath the dark sun-scented pines
Of Asolo, he hummed his latest lines,
  And bade his white-winged songs go flying home.

Then when the red sails round by Lido came
  To rest, and idle now the gondolier
Beneath the Lion and those masts aflame,
Guessed fingers in the old Venetian game,
A dark boat neared. Death called the poet's name,
  Then straight toward the sunset seemed to steer.

[1] Extract from a letter of Browning's to a friend, written a few weeks before his death.—Cf. *The Athenæum*, Jan. 4th.

The King's Library

Another prow pushed quay-wards, wrought
of gold,
Pure gold, and with the lily in her hand
The Maid, whose virgin arms did once enfold
The world's Salvation, leaned to bless the
hold,
And smile on him whose music had extolled
The Lion and the Lily of the land.

. . . . . .

Then up into the lordly Palace Hall
Bright angels passed to lead him to the
shore,
And o'er his body did they lay for pall
Italia's love and England's loss, and all
Cried, "He whose spirit the Heaven from
Earth doth call,
Freed men, and lo, is freed for evermore."

. . . . . .

"Yea freed the most to find his being whole,
'The broken arc, in Heaven a perfect
round';
Free with the freedom of that kindred soul
Whose love and life through all the under-
roll
Of sorrowful dark, has kept him to the goal,
And free to utter his full self in sound."

Then with those angels silently he went,
Pushed from the steps, left Venice flaming bright
Above her sunset waters; backward bent
Towers shook, so swift astern the waves were sent
Domes danced, and still the harp's accompaniment
Came with his voice to call us toward the light.

And other voices called, for other prows
Pushed after, gorgeous, sweet for myrtle flowers,
With long-robed men therein, upon whose brows
Were caps of honour such as he who knows
Bellini's Doge can tell of, men of vows
By their tight lips, the men who built the towers.

Alas! they cried, "To what far island steers
The boat that bears our poet-soul away?
We built the city, but his glory rears
Anew the walls, eternal as the years;

We took the sea to marriage, but he wears
The ring that weds our Venice. Let him stay!"

. . . . . .

Then the stars paled, yet paled not that bright star,
But grew: the grey sea heaved from dusk to gold,
And sailing we were ware of hills afar—
The amethystine hills where angels are—
That rose from burnished calm no tempests mar
To skies of peace that never can grow old.

. . . . . .

We neared the land, and multitudes foreknew
His coming, waved a forestry of palm.
The singer's face most like an angel grew,
Far off we saw what fires rekindled flew
Forth from his eyes, as near the vessel drew,
And o'er the waves to meet us came a Psalm.

"O girder of Truth's sword upon men's thigh,
And looser of men's fear for mortal harm,
If but they leave their castles to the sky,
And go forth dauntless when the foe draws nigh,
Thine was the clarion call to victory
Against the world's inevitable swarm!"

Then to the singer did they bring a crown,
And thoughts that long had struggled unto birth
Took form melodious, wonderful, full-grown,
And many souls came near to him half known,
Souls strong through loss and loving like his own,
Friends of his mind and making upon earth.

On either side to let him forward move
The gracious congregation did divide;
But those clear eyes that flashed for joy to prove
The bliss of recognition seemed to rove,
As looking for fulfilment of all love,
As yearning still, and still unsatisfied.

. . . . . .

E'en as he gazed, with amaranth on her brow,
And all the long upgathered love of years,
Came one whose eyes from distance seemed to know
Her bliss his perfect glory; with such glow
Souls met and mingled, the sad Earth below
Felt the far joy in Heaven, and ceased from tears.

H. D. R.

Browning on Failure

"We fall to rise."
—Epilogue to *Asolando.*

Browning has often been called an optimist. If by this it be meant that he is sure that with God there can be no waste; that nothing in creation is without use, however hidden from our eyes that use may be; that how much soever the human will may swerve from that High Will which is our peace, it may yet come back to that peace; he may be credited with what some of us would rather call faith than optimism. But if he could be supposed to hold and proclaim that, when the human will is set to wrongful willing; when it is withered by disuse or frittered upon inanities, we may think that it does not matter; that in the end nothing really matters at all; that, by-and-by all will, all must, come right; we should not call this faith, for faith is of strength, and this belief, if indeed it be not a thing

too invertebrate to receive that name, is assuredly of weakness.

Therefore we distinguish, as he would have us distinguish, between those of his characters whose fall to rise sets them on heights sometimes even higher than, unfallen, they would have attained to; and those who deliberately choose the lower, even, it may be, the lowest life, in preference to the life of immortal grace and immortal glory. Here it may be noted that Browning's "fall to rise" is inevitably and inseparably bound up with his belief in immortality.

> ". . . leave Now to dogs and apes;
> Man has Forever."

We shall find then, among Browning's persons of the drama of life, those under whose failure there lies the potentiality and more than the potentiality, the likelihood, even the certainty, of an ultimate success, if not now, in that forever whose beginnings are here; as well as those whose destination, like Guido Franceschini's, Browning would make to be what he has conceived of as—

> ". . . that sad obscure sequestered state
> Where God unmakes, but to remake, the soul
> He else had made in vain."

We find those in whom the fire divine was burning, who suffered it to be, not quenched entirely, but brought low indeed by self-thought, by ambition, by the lack of that high virtue which is perhaps the most unappreciated, because the most misunderstood, by the world, the Humility that surely climbed the Cross side by side with the Lady Poverty ;[1] those, too, in whom was the want of the knowledge of proportion, or the failure to bring that knowledge to bear on life ; those who struggled against the limitations set around them, limitations of environment, physical conditions, lack of means, all those things wherewith the strong among us wrestle a fall, or, as it may be, many a fall, and win ; and which the weak sink under, or at least bow heavily beneath.

Again, in this "fall to rise," we may distinguish between the failure that is merely external and the failure that is in oneself; and we know how often there is a partaking of both.

A merely external failure is, as well we know, often and often equivalent to the highest success. It was thus with the

[1] *Paradiso*, xi. 72.

Patriot, led with bound hands and bleeding brow to the foot of the scaffold. A year ago on this very day, this day of his ignominy and shame, myrtle and roses had been strewn in his path, and the bells had pealed, and there had been nothing that heart or hand could have refused him. But now, in his humiliation, pelted and hissed, now, in this hour of what looks indeed like a failure most supreme, he is quiet and blest in the keeping of God. "I am safer so."

In Caponsacchi we have at first the failure in himself; the failure in aim, and therefore in life; that degradation of the priest by the wearing of what the old Pope calls

"Now hypocrite's disguise, now fool's costume."

Indeed a garb "discordant" and "ungainly." And when Caponsacchi has been lifted up heavenwards by his contact with a perfectly pure soul, and has entered the ranks of high chivalry for her defence, he is defeated. All that he has done seems of no avail; he has not saved Pompilia from the murderous notched edge of Guido's knife. But he has saved her from the loss of faith in man, which many find the way to loss of faith

in God, it being the ignoring or the breaking of the communion of saints; and his own soul has attained a height it never knew before, and he stands in a triumph of which for the time he is ignorant and uncomprehending. As we know, it is the struggle that is worthful, whatever the attainment may be; the attempt that counts, however imperfect be the execution.

"The prize is in the process; knowledge means
Ever renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach."
—*Ferishtah's Fancies.*

In *Youth and Art* the life-failure is not, I think, meant to be understood as arising out of pure and intense devotion to Art, demanding the sacrifice of hearth and home; but rather from that longing for the recognition of the world, that passion for evident glory, that worship of comfort and display, which has choked off so much true art, and been so deadly to the souls of its followers. Neither of the two who have let the call of the spring-time pass appears to have had anything like true genius. The man has talent enough to rise to a comfortable level,

and has the seal of society success in meeting "the Prince at the board": the woman, married to a rich old lord, is queen, not queen of song, but queen at *bals paré*. And both of them have a poor soulless triumph, instead of that glorious intensity of life and all its powers, in which they might have

"Starved, feasted, despaired, been happy."

In *Numpholeptos*, that beautiful record of aspiration awakened and quickened and nourished through a great love and exceeding reverence for the very embodiment of chastity, we have the record of a failure that has in it all the seed of a success such as few may know the fullness of. Here is one whose difficulty of reconciling not knowledge of evil merely, but actual contact with it, and that knowledge, that contact, permitted, even commanded to him; of reconciling this with the splendour of purity symbolised by the white light in which she who has caught his soul and fired it with desire for the best and highest, is enshrined; that purity, whose attainment alone will entitle him to his supreme reward. He will not be contented to be clay; he must crave

for, struggle for, battle for that "redundant bliss,"

"Love, the love whole and sole without alloy."

He may have pardon, but that is not enough; he may possess forgiveness full and free, but "the one entire and perfect chrysolite" is what he lives to gain. Baffled, beaten back, even for a moment passionately in word renouncing the quest and upbraiding her at whose bidding it has been undertaken, he yet girds up his loins, and despite of failure, failure over and over again repeated, he goes forth again.

"Forth at your behest
I fare. Who knows but this—the crimson quest—
May deepen to a sunrise, not decay
To that cold, sad, sweet smile?—which I obey."

In *Paracelsus* we have the story of intense aspiration, and of error and failure, and the bitter realisation of failure and the coming so near to great despair: but at the last we have the light shining in upon the soul, and we know that Paracelsus sees.

The three long poems of Browning's early period, *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, and *Sordello* (though *Pauline* cannot fairly be classed with these far

riper poems), all deal with this theme, which must, one feels, have had a deep interest indeed for him who has been described as one whose work shows, like his own *Pomegranate*,

> "A heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity."

What has our poet to say of the cause of failure in oneself; of the will that might have willed aright and would not; of the arm that was meant to be used in its strength, and was suffered to fall slack?

The deliberate choice of a lower life is that which bears in itself the punishment of the gradual loss of ability to rise beyond it.

> "Thou art shut
> Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
> Thy sense upon the world. 'Tis thine
> For ever—take it."

There is the failure that comes from the hugging of some one sin, at first, perhaps, thought of in the guise of a fancy or a whim, and later on as a weakness; but growing from venial to deadly, a mortal cancer of the spirit. So, in *Gold Hair: a Story of Pornic*, the maiden whom all had thought of as a very saint, dies a victim to the deadly sin of avarice.

"Leave me my poor gold hair," she has cried, in what seemed a mere moment of girlish vanity, and it has been left,

> ". . . curled around her brow, like a crown,
> And coiled beside her cheek, like a cap,
> And calmed about her neck—ay, down
> To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
> I' the gold, it reached her gown."

And the face, "like a silver wedge 'mid the yellow wealth," lay there, and the crucifix was planted on the girl's breast "'twixt edge and edge" of all the gold. Many and many a year after the secret was horribly revealed when the girl's skull was found wedged among a heap of gold coins, which had been hidden by the "wonder of flix and floss." And the poet, who, as he says, sees reasons and reasons to suppose that the Christian faith is true, gives as the first of them :

> "'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
> At the head of a lie—taught original sin,
> The corruption of man's heart."

Perhaps the most painful case of failure recorded by Browning, and this because it has come through transgression of elemental law, "the straight outflow of law," "the

fount fresh from God's footstool," is that of Louscha, the mother who suffers the wolves to tear her children from her, and can come home to tell the story, and finish by speaking of the good of tears and of the sweetness of life.

Thamuris falls through pride, the pride whereby he holds himself greater and higher than the Heavenly Muse.

How grandly he marches that morning which has the mastery over all the pomps of nature, whereof

"Each, with a glory and a rapture twined
About it, joined the rush of air and light
And force: the world was of one joyous mind.

. . . . . .

"Thamuris, marching, let no fancy slip
Born of the fiery transport; lyre and song
Were his, to smite with hand and launch from lip—

"Peerless recorded, since the list grew long
Of poets (saith Homeros) free to stand
Pedestalled 'mid the Muses' temple-throng,

"A statued service, laurelled, lyre in hand,
(Ay, for we see them)—Thamuris of Thrace
Predominating foremost of the band.

"Therefore the morn-ray that enriched his face,
If it gave lambent chill, took flame again
From flush of pride; he saw, he knew the place."

He is sure of victory. But

"Which wins—Earth's poet or the Heavenly Muse?"

And Browning's Aristophanes himself, who has sung of Thamuris marching, fails as one who has frittered spiritual strength instead of bringing it to bear on life and the needs of life.

In *Martin Relph* also there is the great failure, the failure that came of the hidden motive for that one instant ungrasped, that one opportunity let go.

Much may be said of the failure of Andrea del Sarto, of Djabal in *The Return of the Druses*, of Tresham in *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, which play itself is a tragedy of failure, of the lovers in *In a Balcony*, and of others whom it is not possible here to indicate. Of the sordidness of failure in Sludge the Medium we must be silent.

How good to turn therefrom to the splendour of the certainty of success underlying failure through limitation, treated of in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and *Abt Vogler*. Here is

the high heartening that is the outcome of lofty faith.

Tragedy has been said to purify the soul through the passions of pity and terror. We seek here another source of purification : we find it in hope, in faith, and most of all in that charity which recognises the value and the merit of promise even through the blighting of performance, the beauty of the jewel, even in the swine's snout a jewel still, one day, as we trust, to know a worthier setting ; the love that sees through the winter of the soul the tender green of the spring leafage, and the budding of the spring flowers, and hears through the ice-bound silence the music of the time of the singing of birds.

Let us then thank and bless him who on what were perhaps the last notes of his singing, laid his creed as the creed of one who

" Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

EMILY HICKEY.

NOTE.—I have to thank the Editor of *The Nineteenth Century and After* for his courteous permission to incorporate in this paper part of an article published in his Magazine, October 1911. E. H.

Browning and Wordsworth on "Intimations of Immortality"

Between Browning and Wordsworth there is this in common, that both were teachers; that both believed that they had a message to deliver, or a gospel to preach; that both created in order to reveal. And there the likeness ends. As to the quality of the message, or the mode of its delivery, Wordsworth states what he conceives to be primal truths in terms of the imagination, and leaves them to move the mind and impress the soul through the exercise of the imagination. Browning confronts these primal truths, wrestles with them, makes them his own and ours, by the might of intellectual energy and poetic passion. Wordsworth's faith was the reward of a natural gift, Browning's a triumphant deliverance.

Let Wordsworth speak first. Not only in the great *Ode*, which may be likened to an

orchestral symphony suggesting rather than defining the hidden and essential theme, but in the *Prelude*, and—here and there—in later lyrics of his early work he speaks of Immortality. There was a development, perhaps a change of thought and feeling, but there is no record of a struggle. In a note written in his old age Wordsworth maintains that he was possessed from the first with a confident belief in the "indomitableness of his own spirit;" but, in his first outlook on the surface of things, Death shuts in the horizon. He neither affirms nor denies the immortality of the soul. There is no mingling of celestial strains with "the still, sad music of humanity." In *Descriptive Sketches*, which date from his twenty-second year, he speaks of the "avalanche of death," of "death's cold touch," of "the land where all things are forgot"; and it is significant that in the successive versions of the poem now one and now another of these despairful images were rejected as unworthy of a poet's aim. Nor in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, and 1800, when he had risen to the height of his poetic genius, does he ask or answer any questions as to the future life.

Once, indeed, in *The Brothers*, the priest declares that here "among the mountains," our "immortal part" craved no symbols of immortality; but, when his own grief touches him, "Lucy is in her grave"—

> "She neither hears nor sees;
> Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
> With rocks, and stones, and trees."

What, then, were Wordsworth's "intimations" of Immortality? By what avenues of the mind and soul did a light arise in the gloom, and become the "master light of all his seeing"?

In the *Prelude*, which was written between 1801 and 1805, as he interprets the visions of childhood and youth by the afterthought of maturity, he lays claim to a kind of second sense, a trance-like experience in which the visible and material took on the qualities of the things that are not seen. He does not rationalise these experiences, but he passes through them into a sense, and from a sense into a faith in immortality. The "sky and the sea, the sea and the sky," the wonder of the lonely hills, the unfathomable, incomprehensible beauty of Nature, are not

only revelations but proofs of their infinitude, and of his. For in these abstractions he had "glimmering views"—

> "How life pervades the undecaying mind,
> How the immortal soul with God-like power
> Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
> That time can lay upon her."

I have said that there was a change. A time came when a great personal grief, the drowning of his brother at sea, drew down and fixed these high and shadowy instincts on the hope of another life. It was during that year of sorrow, 1805–1806, that he finished the *Ode*, begun some years before as a lament for the visionary gleams of childhood. In the meantime another race had been, and other palms were won. It is not that vision, nor the passing of that vision, which he desires to celebrate, but indirectly, and through the poetic medium of the Platonic theory of pre-existence, he unfolds the natural process which had led him to the "faith that looks through death," and left him the vision that endures.

Browning was more than forty years younger than Wordsworth. He was a dweller in the

suburbs, not among the mountains. He belonged to a generation which did not make, but looked back upon, history. He had all manner of knowledge of art and science, of the customs, the literature, the ideals of other nations. He was not, perhaps, a great playwright, but he was a mighty dramatist. As a poet he could put himself in the place of all sorts and conditions of men, and speak for them, but in so doing he liberated his own soul. The maker and inventor of a thousand episodes of human life, a hundred types of men and women, his aim is to rise through and past his art "from the finite to infinity, and from man's dust to God's divinity;" as saith Johannes Agricola, "for I intend to get to God.'" Here he is speaking *ex abundantiâ cordis*. This was the spring of his poetic energies from *Pauline* to *Asolando*. His was an instinctive but by no means an unconscious faith. He was a child of the new age of science and criticism. He understood how and when Nature witnessed against Hope. He was a subtle reasoner, and neither ignored nor shrank from trains of thought which led away from light and peace. He could not if he would "blot out cosmogony,

> Geology, ethnology, what not,
> (Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
> That signifies some faith's about to die)"

but, in spite of all that lets or puzzles or baffles, he stands his ground—

> " Leave Now to dogs and apes,
> Man has Forever."

Over and over again, in *Christmas Eve*, in *Saul*, in *Abt Vogler*, in *Prospice*, in prologue or epilogue to those manifold parleyings of his later Muse, he throws down the gage, and proclaims his faith in the life of the world to come.

As Wordsworth learnt from Nature the secret of the something more, and beheld the real presence of the infinite, so the inexhaustible fountain of human love was the schoolmaster which led Browning to a like conviction of eternal love and eternal life. But as though he felt it had not been enough to assert his faith in immortality, at the very last in those difficult but inspiring stanzas entitled *Reverie*, he gives a reason for his faith. Power is manifest in Nature, in earth and star and sun ; but Power makes for evil as well as good, and if we cry to Nature, she

will not hear. There is no striking a balance. Good does not compensate for evil. The last enemy is Death, and Death is victorious. But there is an inner world of good and evil, in the living soul of man; and in that world, good, which is "incontrovertible," does compensate for evil. That evil is finite, that good infinite; and, in the end, Power and Love may be conceived as one.

"I have faith such end shall be:
From the first, Power was—I knew.
Life has made clear to me
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? Later there dawns a day,
If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play."

ERNEST HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

Browning as a Letter-writer

An apt line of his poetry may fitly preface a few words on the letters which Browning wrote.

"There are letters, veritable sheets"—*veritable*, because most prominent among the qualities which pervade them is the writer's love of truth, and his determination to express it. The expression of truth, as he saw it, was his chief aim as a poet. I shall endeavour to show, so far as time will permit me, that it was also his chief aim as a letter-writer.

There is a statement of his on this head which is, at first sight, rather disconcerting. "Art," he says,

> "Art remains the one way possible
> Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine, at least."

But we need not wrest the passage from its context. Occurring at the close of *The*

Ring and the Book, when he was conscious that he had indeed grasped the skirts of the elusive goddess Verity, and constrained her to utter true speech to some purpose, it obviously reflects the mood of exaltation in which he looked back upon successful achievement. But there are other moods. The highest utterances of the Sibyl were extorted by the inspiration of the god; but it does not follow that her everyday speech was negligible. Granted that the loftiest truth is transcendental, yet "here upon this bank and shoal of time" we look for truth's emanations in the commerce of daily life, whether in the spoken or the written word. And such emanations are as conspicuous in Browning's letters as, we wholly believe, they were in his conversation.

He is not among the great, the classic letter-writers. He had no ambition to be one of them. He did not address his friends in studied phrases, as Pope did, with a deliberate appeal to the verdict of posterity. He did not write to them to show how well he could write, but from the ordinary motives; with some information, it may be, to impart or to solicit, some advice to give, some con-

solation to offer. Except during the twenty months which preceded his marriage, when the letters to Miss Barrett rained thick and fast, he seems throughout his life to have avoided anything like regular correspondence. He tells Miss Barrett that he writes to none but her. Certainly there was an exception in "Waring's" favour, when that friend of his early manhood had departed for New Zealand; but even these communications ceased with Browning's marriage. From thence onward, until his wife's death, it was she, a voluminous correspondent, who in general wrote for both. Where he adds a postscript—and this seldom happens—it is little more than a word of cordial greeting. Even to Milsand, with whom of all men he is said to have been in closest accord, he wrote but seldom. Some of the best letter-writers have been recluses, such as Cowper and FitzGerald, men whose utterances were the outcome of their leisurely meditations; but mingling freely with his fellow-creatures, and with so many friends at call, Browning did not feel the need of this particular form of self-expression.

By what factors is a man's epistolary style

determined? By, among others, the amount of his leisure, and by the degree of his intimacy with his correspondent. Drawing a conjectural bow, and avoiding tedious cross-divisions, one may say that Browning had two epistolary manners; one, the torrential —a fair index of his talk—in which he sweeps along from one topic to another, swirling stormily round opposing boulders and foaming over a rocky bed, with here and there a stretch of calm, deep water. This manner is naturally more apparent when he is writing to her from whom he had no reserves, and, in a lesser degree, to one or two of his more intimate friends of later years. The other, chiefly used in answering inquiries about his poems or his opinions, is careful, balanced, and precise. Thus, when Wordsworth's poetry was under consideration, after giving Professor Knight his opinion as to where the high-water mark of that poet's work is to be found, he concludes as follows: "After these, the solution grows weaker, the crystals gleam more rarely, and the assiduous stirring up of the mixture is too apparent and obtrusive. To the end crystals are to be come at; but my own opinion resembles that of

the old man in the admirable *Resolution and Independence*—

"Once I could meet with them on every side,
But they have dwindled long by slow decay—
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

Sound criticism and apt illustration!

Other excellent examples are to be found among the letters privately printed by Mr. Wise; upon which in my endeavour to complete Hall Griffin's work—in whose place I am here to-day—I was privileged to draw. But to both manners the epithet *veritable* equally applies. In both, too, we find that outspoken forcefulness which marked both the utterances and the character of Robert Browning. Hear him, for instance, enlarging, sixteen years after the event, on the iniquities of "Mr. Sludge, the Medium." "If ever I come across the fellow's path, I shall probably be silly enough to soil my shoe by kicking him; but I should prefer keeping that disgrace from myself as long as possible." And hear him once more in a mood of happier retrospection, when, after an interval of more than fifty years, he calls up his earliest memories of Asolo, the little mountain city

that was so dear to him. The letter, addressed to Mrs. Arthur Bronson, has only lately come to light.

"When I first found out Asolo," he writes, "I lodged at the main hotel in the Square—an old, large Inn, of the most primitive kind. The ceiling of my bedroom was traversed by a huge crack, or rather cleft, caused by the earthquake last year; the sky was as blue as blue could be, and we were all praying in the fields, expecting the town to tumble in. On the morning after my arrival I walked up to the Rocco; and on returning to breakfast I mentioned it to the landlady, whereon a respectable, middle-aged man, sitting by, said: 'You have done what I, born here, never thought of doing.' I took long walks every day, and carried away a lively recollection of the general beauty, but I did not write a word of *Pippa Passes*—that idea struck me when walking in an English wood, and I made use of Italian memories.

"I used to dream of seeing Asolo in the distance and of making vain attempts to reach it—repeatedly dreamed this for many a year. And when I found myself once more in Italy with my sister, I went straight there from

Venice. We found the old Inn lying in ruins, a new one being built to take its place—I suppose that which you see now. We went to a much inferior Albergo, the best then existing, and were roughly but pleasantly entertained for a week. People told us the number of inhabitants had greatly increased, and things seemed generally more ordinary and more lifelike. I am happy that you like it so much. When I got my impression Italy was new to me." The intrinsic and autobiographic value of this letter must be apparent to us all.

It is good to think that in the third and last sojourn at Asolo, which shortly followed it, all the old magic of the place was renewed. It was the Indian Summer of our poet's life—that period of calm and brightness on which winter was soon to follow.

H. C. Minchin.

Browning as I Knew Him

"Here and here did England help me:
How can I help England?"—say.

Gathered on this memorable occasion, we can say not only how he helped England, but how he is still helping her; and how his influence has permeated, not alone the teachers and leaders, but also the great body of workers in our commonwealth. Speaking for the workers, I can say that the debt we owe to him is great indeed.

In our early years Carlyle caught us in the whirlwind of his passion and storm. He led us out of the gloomy and intricate ways of doubt, yet, for the most part, we found ourselves still in the solitary desert, where no water is. Then came Browning, and with the prescience of a Seer of the Invisible, he led us towards the Promised Land—sometimes by rough and difficult paths, at others through forests and over English meadows,

whence larks soared and sang to the accompaniment of many a tiny rivulet. Then, indeed, did we find it a land flowing with milk and honey, full of wonderful surprises, and even to this day we have not exhausted its treasures or its beauties.

As he helped us of old England, so will he help young England—if his work is enshrined, not only in our hearts, but in our lives; while by his poetic achievement he has sustained the work of God in the world, and built up the spiritual and moral manhood of the race.

It is not for me to speak of the greatness of his poetic output, or the Shakespearean wealth of his regal brain and heart; but I fearlessly assert that there are few who have realised the wonder and power of his work more than I have done, and to whom he has been, and still is, a Master and Teacher.

It is my privilege to-day to assert that the man was as great and noble as his work; that he was brave, strenuous, virile—Elizabethan in the splendour of his manhood, Victorian in the purity of his life. There are those who say, "Never mind the manner of a man's life, we only have to concern ourselves with his work." But we *do* like to know

that the man who has helped us was a good man, a man of honour and unspotted by the world. And this, we who knew him and loved him, can emphatically assert.

It was about the end of the summer of 1868 that I, a young disciple, ventured to address to him some words explanatory of the debt I felt I owed him, and to assure him that I, with but an ordinary English lad's education, and a worker in a London printing-office, could not only understand his work, but delight in it. To my amazement I duly received a response, kindly and courteous, and which contained a passage which has become historical: "I am heartily glad I have your sympathy for what I write: intelligence, by itself, is scarcely the thing with respect to a new book—as Wordsworth says (a little altered), 'You must like it before it be worthy of your liking.' In spite of your intelligence and sympathy, I can have but little doubt but that my writing has been, in the main, too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should

be a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man. So perhaps on the whole I get my deserts and something over." And thus there began an acquaintance which ripened into friendship.

The record of his kindness is proverbial, but it is based on intrinsic fact. The buoyancy and geniality of his nature was at once apparent as he came bounding into the room to greet you—taking your hand with a smile that disarmed all timidity, and made you feel at ease. If people sought him out after long years of isolation, and he chose to accept their courtesy in good faith, as was the manner of the man, that did not make him eager for adulation. He had friends, good and true, among the aristocracy of wealth; he had also friends, good and true, among the aristocracy of labour. His lovableness, modesty, gentleness, courtesy, were but part of his everyday nature. During the last few years of his life he was bored considerably by strangers, who sought him from mere curiosity, yet he was very tolerant to such despite the inroads made upon his time and strength. But to the earnest spirit, to the man or woman whom his words had helped,

he was always accessible; while he would put himself to endless trouble to aid or oblige his friends.

At the same time Browning, as I knew him, had a perfect detestation of being made a show of, and refused on every possible occasion to attend a gathering wherein there might be a public recognition. On one occasion when a couple of performances of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* had been arranged for, he had, as usual, declined to be present. The manager thereupon explained to him the trouble the actors had taken in the matter, and how disappointed they would be at his absence. "I felt he was right," Browning said to me, when narrating the incident, "so I told him that if I could be put into a private box, and nobody else was told I was present, I would come." This was done, and the sequel is too good to be omitted. It appears that at the conclusion of the performance, he at once went behind the curtain, and thanked the company for the manner in which they had performed his play. He had hardly left, when in came a prominent member of the Browning Society, who, in expressing *his*

delight, said that he intended to write to the poet that very evening, and tell him how capitally it had passed off. "*Oh, but we've just seen him!*" was the general exclamation —to the momentary discomfiture of the said prominent member, who had no idea that the poet had been present.

On more than one occasion, within my knowledge, he put himself to considerable trouble to obtain situations for people whom he had come across, and whom he was eager to help. He was, in a very wide sense, the friend of man. As each succeeding volume of verse appeared, he was more than ever grateful for any care exercised by that sorely-tried individual, the "printer's reader"; and he told me that he always made a point of writing and requesting that his "heartiest thanks should be forwarded to the 'reader' for such help and assistance."

Browning, as I knew him, was always lavish in praise of the work of his contemporaries, but it was only in certain moods you could get him to speak of his own work. I recollect once, referring to *Christmas Eve*, asking him if he had any special conventicle in view when referring to the "little chapel."

"No," he replied, "it was all imaginary—save the lunar rainbow, *I saw that.*" And, as he went on to describe the wonderful apparition, the poem itself was passed over. On another occasion I referred to Shelley, and his *Memorabilia*—

> "And did you once see Shelley plain,
> And did he stop and speak to you:
> And did you speak to him again?
> How strange it seems and new!
>
> But you were living before that,
> And you are living after,
> And the memory I started at—
> My starting moves your laughter."

Browning remarked that he vividly remembered the circumstance that gave rise to the poem. He was one day in the shop of Hodgson, the well-known London bookseller, when a stranger came in, who in the course of conversation with the bookseller, spoke of something that Shelley had once said to him. Suddenly the stranger paused and burst into laughter, as he observed the poet looking at him with blanched face; "and," continued Browning, "I still vividly remember how strangely the presence of a man who had seen and spoken with Shelley affected me."

It has often been said that Browning took little interest in public affairs. Be this as it may, he was not only patriotic, but imbued with the democratic spirit. He took a real interest in the people, and was concerned in whatever means were being put forth for the amelioration of their condition in life. I remember one evening when, in company with Milsand, Browning took us out into the square patch of ground that did duty for garden at the back of the house in Warwick Crescent. The poet remarked that he rarely went out there, as he was so overlooked. But here, on this quiet summer evening, he talked concerning the condition of the people, and there was a tremulousness in his voice as he spoke of the apparently hopeless condition in which so many of them lived. He alluded to Sunday Schools, among other things — his interest having been aroused by a request that had come to him to write a Sonnet for the Centenary of the Sunday School movement. This, however, he felt bound to decline, on account of his invariable rule not to contribute to newspapers or magazines.

Browning brought me often into contact with Milsand — that accomplished French

critic, and eminently sane and wise man. I saw him often during his yearly visits to the poet: and, indeed, to see Browning and Milsand together was in itself an education. A very lovable soul was this man; genial and human, with a knowledge of men and affairs truly remarkable, and steeped to the depths of his being in the poetic work of his friend.

Lastly, Browning as I knew him was pre-eminently a Christian. I do not mean by this that he was a dogmatist, but he was a believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ, as attested by *Karshish*, the *Death in the Desert*, and, in spirit and by implication, the *Reverie* of Asolando. He lived the Christ-spirit, and that is surely enough for us. I once showed him a little booklet that had come to me from America containing extracts from his poems arranged for each day of the year. He looked it through with much interest, and as he handed it back, remarked: "Ah, how this sort of thing humbles one; and yet it *is* something to have sown seed like this, isn't it?" He knew the worth of his own achievements—none knew it better; but of vain-glory therein no trace was manifested. In the August of 1888 I saw him for

the last time. He opened the door to bid me good-bye, laid his hand upon my shoulder with a "God bless you," and repeating "if I live" spoke of meeting again—but I saw his face no more. *This* was Robert Browning as I knew him.

WILLIAM G. KINGSLAND.

An Australian Appreciation of Browning

In the tribute which we offer to-day to the genius of Browning, it is fitting to remember that his fame, and the love of his poems, have spread to the ends of the English-speaking world. In Australia, as I know, there are many who delight in his smaller poems. And this is much. But there are not a few, also, who have sought to know Browning from *Pauline* to *Asolando*, and have found in him a mighty inspiration for thought and life. In Australia, doubtless, as elsewhere, there are men and women who pride themselves on their love of literature, but who regard Browning with indifference or even with dislike. But we need not be greatly disturbed by the fact that many have failed to appreciate his work. If the poetry of Browning has ever held us in its grip, if it has stirred our emotions and quickened our

imaginations, if it has led us to believe and to feel that the world has a deeper and a higher meaning than in our duller moments we are apt to think, we may treat very lightly the censure of those to whom his verse is a sealed book. We, at least, may thank him from our hearts for all that he has given us, and may say of his poetry, in the words of *My Star*, it "has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it."

What are the characteristics which have made Browning so great a power? Among the more important, I venture to select the peculiarity of his dramatic genius, which portrays the world of thought and feeling rather than of action; his wide range of treatment, and the variety of his types of character; his vigorous vitality, delighting to dwell on the stir of thought and emotion, and on the great tendencies of human life; his prevailing tone of manly cheerfulness; and the combination of an optimistic faith with the demand for a strenuous morality.

In a true though peculiar sense, Browning claims the title of dramatic poet. "Men's thoughts and loves and hates"—these are his subjects; but in his most numerous and

most important poems, he frankly abandons the restrictions imposed by an "external machinery of incidents." Born in an age when spontaneous action is rare, and when men with simply legible passions do not bulk so largely as before, he has caught the spirit of his time. It is the inner life which he has sought to express, often with great delicacy and power and with an art which is nearly perfect. The poetry of the Elizabethan age cannot be expected to repeat itself any more than that of the Homeric. Each time has its own conditions, and in Browning's poems we have something new in literature, dramatic "in principle," and yet, in their expression of complex thought and feeling, bearing the mark of their century. High and low, fair and foul, far and near, fall within his range; in recalling the past, he is often fonder of bypaths than of the beaten track; but yet we need look only a little way below the surface to see that he is depicting, it may be under some unaccustomed guise, tendencies which are seen to-day, and men and women to be met with in our drawing-rooms or our streets. He is especially daring in sounding the depths of human nature in its ignorance,

its superstitions, its depravity. For him, the poetry of life lies largely in the conflict of good and evil. Thus he throws himself fearlessly into the thoughts and feelings of the most opposite types. He is as much at home with the superstitious fear of Caliban, or the malevolent cunning of Guido, as with the saintlike purity of Pompilia, or the ecstasy of his Abt Vogler. Nor can we dissociate these characteristics from his strong vitality. In the delight of bodily activity he finds, as in *Saul*, a theme for praise. The stress of emotion, intellect, and will, has for him a higher charm. He would forego no jot of the experience of life, even when most mingled with suffering, and even in the article of death he would retain a vivid consciousness of the struggle. He delights to hold up men before us in the crises of their lives, when the smoothness of habit and convention is stripped away. The repose and lethargy of the soul he most of all deprecates. In his strong morality he deems it better that men should grasp criminal pleasure, if that be the prize they set before them, than that they should forego it through lack of courage and determination ; for in the active movements of

life there is always the hope of a reaction to be won from stern experience.

The so-called optimism of Browning has often been misunderstood. It did not consist in the belief that the joys of life outweigh its sorrows. Browning shows, indeed, a hearty relish for the enjoyments which earth offers to her children, and denies that the poet's age is sad. But against this we have the statement in *La Saisiaz* that "sorrow does, and joy does nowise—life well weighed —preponderate." Browning's estimate of life, however, was not a balance of pleasures and pains, as if he were weighing so much sugar against a deadweight in the other scale. His optimism was the faith that a wise and good Intelligence is at the heart of things, that the world is the manifestation of a loving purpose, and that even sin and sorrow are subservient to the good. This faith is sometimes expressed in the simplest way, as in the words of Pippa's song—

> "God's in His heaven—
> All's right with the world!"

But what of the stupendous facts of evil and suffering? His belief is that if we could

contemplate the world in its entirety, all perplexities would vanish away. The burden seemed to be laid on him of probing the iniquity and sorrow of life to its depths, and still of asserting that the world is ruled, not only by Intellect and Power, but by Goodness and Love. Sometimes he repeats the old idea that evil has no real existence in the order of things, and lives only in our limited apprehension. Again, he speaks of good and evil, joy and sorrow, as necessary opposites, which must be reconciled in the scheme of things. Thus, in *Pisgah Sights*, life is compared to the earth, whose roughnesses, if seen from a sufficient distance, would shade away into the perfect orb. On this view, the need of human effort would seem at first to be set aside; we are the puppets of God, with whom "there is no last nor first." Browning, however, is as far as possible from counselling the abandonment of effort. The power which overrules all for good demands the moral activity of man, who must hope and strive, and when he falls must strive again. It is not for us to play at Providence with our souls. The sophist in *Fifine at the Fair* sinks to self-

contempt, and so refutes his plea that he was entitled, for a time, to an adventure of lawless freedom.

In Browning's thought, then, the conviction that suffering and evil are means to a higher good is to be used as a stimulus to effort. Progress is a distinctive mark of man, and our failure here is "but a triumph's evidence for the fulness of the days." But in the struggle man must be himself a combatant, life's business being just the terrible choice between good and ill. In moral activity, the victory which lies in every blow is a conclusive pledge of the triumph of the good. By him who strives for the right, the ideal is felt, not as something far off and never to be attained, but as an actual power in the world, which is making its presence and its predominance felt here and now. The note which the poet sounds is not, indeed, uniformly triumphant. He acknowledges the impossibility of establishing the reality of a Supreme Love beyond the possibility of doubt. But though he confesses difficulties—and why should he not?—this is the faith to which he clings, at first with full assurance, and later in a

more contemplative and argumentative way. It is one of the glories of Browning that he has set forth this view of the world in a series of dramatic poems, quivering with life and light, and by their intellectual and imaginative power stimulating aspiration, effort, and achievement.

HENRY LAURIE.

The Ring and the Book

Turner painted Norham Castle, and with a vision of loveliness endowed mankind. A film of transparent pigment became henceforth of more importance to humanity than mediæval masonry, with all its associations of might and dominance. The castle has served its purpose: yet still it stands, and many a visitor takes its photograph, because it and its surroundings are the visible objects which inspired Turner's dream.

Browning chanced upon the record of a murder-case. Nigh upon two centuries before his eye fell upon their *simulacra* in the "square old yellow book," the actors in this drama had passed out of the world. The waves of sound set flowing through the Society of seventeenth-century Rome by the impact of certain murderers and their victims, of Pompilia's detractors and her partisans, of counsel for and counsel against the Count, her husband, had long since faded into silence. A

paragraph written in blood had vanished from the pages of the history of our race. With the alchemy of genius Browning restored to the faded script its livid hue. It now moves a far wider public, as deeply as it moved those who saw it written. Browning has re-created Pompilia, Guido, Caponsacchi. The phantoms of the yellow book have taken substance, and not substance only, they have taken form. Until defined by the poet's pen their outlines, seen through the mists of time, were blurred beyond recognition. So completely in form and substance do we owe them to his Art that they are his. He made them. Their prototypes were puppets, these new creations live and move.

From the book Browning dug the gold, "absolute truth, fanciless fact," from which he fashioned the ring. Nothing is left since he removed the gold, but slag. Such as are curious in the processes of poet-craft may care to turn it over. Lovers of Art will fear lest contemplation of the matrix may divert their attention from the glory of the jewel, wrought of the metal which it once contained. So long as the documents on which Browning based his story remained "in Latin, cramp

enough when law had her eloquence to launch, though inter-filleted with Italian streaks when testimony stooped to Mother-Tongue," the risk of this misadventure was not grave. It was limited to the few, and they were persons likely to be on guard against it. Now, admirably translated, it may be had in English for one shilling.

What prompted Browning to preserve the old square yellow book? Turner could not annihilate Norham Castle. Browning's lira-worth of print and manuscript might have been obliterated with the aid of a single zolfanello.

This volume of pleadings has a fascination of its own. The setting forth of the entire criminal charge against Count Guido Franceschini, nobleman of Arezzo, and his bravoes, who were put to death in Rome, February 22, 1698—with charge and countercharge, arguments for the prosecution and arguments in defence, summaries of the case, judgment and letters commenting upon the execution present a vivid picture of the ways of the times and the working of men's minds. It is to be strongly recommended to all who are not interested in *The Ring and the Book*.

Turner painted many a castle beside Norham ; perhaps it would be more accurate to say, composed may a colour-poem which he subscribed with a castle's name.

Browning's method was very different. He was always topographically accurate. No other imaginative artist felt, as he did, the prevailing force of truth. Fiction may fabricate men and women who must have lived somewhere, somewhen, and events in which they may have played a part ; yet the historian is more convincing. A landscape painter chooses the moment when beauty culminates. His eye alone can see that the magic of light, colour, atmosphere can add no further grace. The spirit of a thousand scenes with which his brain is instinct enables him to hold and fix them on his canvas. To an ordinary mind the picture is a new creation, a thing surpassing Nature, whereas in truth its appeal moves us just in proportion as it reproduces Nature. We too have seen the landscape looking thus, or know we might have seen it, had we an artist's eye. But if it be too perfect, if all clash of outline has been corrected, we feel that it rings false. We miss the discords which Nature ever mingles with

her harmonies. Art is safest when it copies Nature, takes her photograph, and presents it in the colours in which all men see her, or might see her, if the moment were propitious. Our poet did not change, he added: "mingled the gold with gold's alloy, and duly tempering both made it bear hammer and be firm to file, a manageable mass. Fancy with fact is just one fact the more." A student who goes to the source whence the poet dug the gold must do the same, and if his fancy does not coincide with Browning's he will find that henceforth his faith is shaken. He no longer reads the story with Browning's eyes. He has his own views regarding the true interpretation of its facts. He cannot yield his judgment to the poet's keeping. The study of the documents has even a worse effect than the paraphrases in which it was fashionable in earlier years to vulgarise his other poems.

Browning is Pompilia's advocate. He is not a strictly impartial reporter of the trial. How could he have fulfilled his duty as a poet, if he had been? For many months he pondered over the problem which the square old yellow book presented, reading and re-reading

it until he knew its every detail. At last he saw his way to an enterprise without precedent in literature. He visualised the trial, its principals, the advocates, the aged Pope to whom the case was finally referred, the man in the street.

Browning called upon his transcendent power of being the personality which for the time he represents. He would in turn, before the trial began, be spokesman of the more vulgar half of Rome—it would be the larger half of London—who thought that Pietro, Violante, and Pompilia, if too severely handled, had come in some degree by their deserts; of the more sensitive and sympathetic crowd; of the murderer's order, cynical, incredulous, indifferent to the sufferings of the common herd. The trial commenced, he would be Guido, Caponsacchi, Pompilia, the Procurator of the Poor, the Fisc, the Pope.

Browning saw his task. From the turbid rhetoric of the the Fisc and of the Procurator of the Poor he must extract the truth. He must mingle it with the personality of each of the nine individuals concerned with the trial. He must fill up, with his fancy, the vast gaps which the historical frag-

ments that he had discovered necessarily left void.

It was Browning's custom to free the facts which he encountered in his very human daily life, from compulsion of circumstance, and mixture of motives. He isolated them from extraneous things, to condense them pure upon his page. In *The Ring and the Book* the hubbub of the Corso, and the wrangle of the law-court sublime crystal-clear.

Never was poet, so speculative as Browning, so philosophical in the common acceptance of the term. He swam far out in the bay, but always to return to land, the solid and the safe. And his land, his starting-point, was human nature. His imagination played with human beings. Dante, Milton, Shelley, seem to have ranged more widely, because their fancy pictured conditions remote from those with which we are familiar. Browning, confining himself to the world of human thought and passion, followed every conceivable motive to the limit of its range.

The fancy which Browning mingled with his facts was real, the facts were but illustrations of reality. He did not absorb the actors in this Roman drama into his personality, he

created a personality for each one of them. To any other man the names in the yellow book would have stood for men and women to whom he would have assigned characters, physical, mental, moral, which would have been composites, made by superposing the portraits of various people who, as he judged, belonged to the classes of which they, severally, were types. Browning's mind worked in the same way, there is no other; but he drew the type-outline with such force, and so clear a definition, as to efface the conflicting outlines of which it is the mean. Each of his men and women is a new individual rather than a type. And—highest art—he effaced himself. Omitting Shakespeare, the imperial artist, whose name must not be profaned by its use in any comparison of style or merit, Browning, of all creative writers, stands alone in his gift of leaving himself out of his work. The justice of this claim is far from being obvious at first, or even on repeated reading.

It is for this reason that I have always longed to hear his poems rendered by our greatest actors. Browning's style is peculiar to himself. His diction is so distinctive that one can almost always recognise a quotation, just

as one recognises a Rembrandt or a Murillo. Yet the portraits which these artists painted were not part Rembrandt, or part Murillo, and part some other person. So Browning's Guido and Pompilia are not part Browning and part his sitter; because we recognise the touch of his brush, and his choice of pigments. They are creations into which he does not paint himself. Each has a personal outlook upon life.

The three typical spectators—the two lawyers and the Pope—saw each a separate cast of *dramatis personæ*. There was but one set of facts, absolute facts; but the proximate ones, the facts of their experience, were different for each of the nine persons who played the principal parts.

Browning's task was clear to him at last; but by what method, and through what medium, was it to be attempted? He adventured the impossible. The recognised vehicle of heroic narrative is decasyllabic verse, penny-a-line prose of police proceedings. He would reconcile the language of gods with the slang of the dirty little court-house, rubbed shiny with the sins of Rome.

Browning looked behind acts; he looked

behind Vice and Virtue. He saw Vice and Virtue as the products of a self-evolving, self-directing Soul. Within the man, as without, good and evil are ever at strife. From their discord is developed Character, the soil in which germinates the seed of act which God appraises in His hollow palm. No man is wholly good or wholly bad. The Soul sides with the good, or countenances the bad, and thus a bias is developed; a bias which shows itself in the course which it compels the man to take when a dilemma suddenly confronts him.

Browning explored the innermost recesses of the mind; he investigated its most secret motions. He extracted the essence of humanity; and the freer from motive he squeezed it—the more nearly it became pure spirit—the more human it was to him.

Robert Browning, psychologist—if ever man deserved the title! Yet his psychology was not of the study, but of the field. It is doubtful whether he was versed in the history of philosophic thought, of the modifications of theory introduced by each succeeding thinker, to be proved inadequate and further modified by the next. But of the

springs of thought he had a knowledge surpassed by no philosopher, and equalled, possibly, by none. In a thousand instances he reveals in a single phrase his intimate acquaintance with the working of the mind, the activity of the Soul, the mind-worker, as he would have termed it.

He realised that whilst he had a great theme, demanding heroic verse; he had so many aspects of mind and feeling to present that a corresponding variety of expression was essential. Milton, in common with all other poets who have used the pentatonic rhythm, recognised that the monotony of its march must be relieved; that grace of diction depends, not upon the accuracy with which a writer maintains his short-long step, but upon the agility with which he shifts his feet.

Browning's theme called upon him to surpass audaciously the most daring liberty of Milton. And this not solely to relieve the monotony of his verse, but for a further and far more serious reason. The rhythm of blank verse has been handed down from the ages when, writing unknown, priest-poets preserved the traditions of the race. Their

epics were easier to memorise in measured phrases, half-chanted. The strain upon the listeners' attention was also lessened.

Milton wrote for the ear through the eye. It is easy when reading his lines to sound them mentally. I indeed find it quite impossible not to sound them. Every word upon which my eye falls booms in the back of my head. No uncertainty as to its proper tone is possible. Browning wrote for the ear through the living voice. I cannot hear his characters speak, until I try their words with my own mouth ; which means, in short, that Milton wrote to describe, Browning to convince.

Still using the old measure, the new poet adopted a new method. Neither want of ear nor lack of skill in poet-craft, still less slovenliness in execution, led him to break the rules of blank verse. Analysis of the poem will show that he elaborated new formulas. In these larger irregularities of motion he is as consistent as Milton in his more graceful variations from the normal step. To license of various kinds, condoned by usage, Browning never gave way.

Browning set himself a task of unexampled

difficulty. He based an epic on the pamphlets which a long dead lawyer had collected and preserved, on account of their professional interest. He would turn them into a poem with lazar-house and law-court for its setting. The litigants should live again, where and as he found them :—

> "This is the honour ;—that no thing I know,
> Feel or conceive, but I can make my own
> Somehow, by use of hand or head or heart."

All these were needed—dexterity, intellect, sympathy—to perform such a task in such a way !

ALEXANDER HILL.

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II

The Robert Browning Settlement

President for 1912 :
ROBERT BARRETT BROWNING

"THE one shrine where is kept continually burning the lamp of devotion to Browning's memory." So a leading man of letters described the historic building which forms the headquarters of the Robert Browning Settlement.

Walworth is now the very centre of the County of London. Its 117,000 people are about the densest swarm of the metropolitan five millions. They are almost entirely working folk, and mostly very poor. But in 1790 Walworth was a rural hamlet, blossoming into a wealthy and fashionable suburb. In that year there was built what was known for a hundred years as York Street Chapel, Lock's Fields. It became three years later the home of a Con-

gregational Church. Its pews were filled with rich and influential worshippers, whose carriages thronged York Street every Sunday.

Of this church both the father and the mother of the poet were members. In the roll of membership occur these entries :—

"No. 78. Admitted before 1805, Wiedemann, Sarah Ann, Peckham, died 18th March, 1849.

"No. 425. Admitted March 1820, Browning, Robert, Southampton St., Removed."

The baptismal register records that "Robert, son of Robert Browning and Sarah Anna his wife, was born in the Parish of St. Giles, Camberwell, on the 7th day of May 1812, and was baptized on the 14th day of June 1812 by me, GEORGE CLAYTON, Minister." A similar entry records the baptism of Sarah Anna Browning, on the 10th of April 1814. In a letter written in August 1845 the poet told his future wife : "Father and mother went this morning to the very Independent Chapel where they took me all those years back to be baptized—and where they heard, this morning, a sermon

preached by the very minister who officiated on that other occasion."

From early life and through his boyhood Robert Browning used to worship, with his father, mother, and sister, in York Street Chapel. A memorial tablet upon the wall now marks the spot where the youthful poet used to sit. The church records also contain a list of members who kept missionary boxes to help the funds of the London Missionary Society. Among these contributors, the name of the mother of the poet regularly recurs until within two years of her death.

These historic associations led to the building being renamed, in 1890, Browning Hall. For a year it was the centre of a Mission. But in 1895 the Robert Browning Settlement was founded under the present Warden, with the Hall as its meeting-place. The Settlement is pan-denominational, being maintained by the service and support of members of all the leading denominations. In 1901 it was incorporated "for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God."

The Settlement is continuously engaged in carrying out this high aim for the benefit

of a most necessitous neighbourhood by a host of such agencies as Men's Brotherhood, Women's Meeting, Adult School, public worship, Fellowship of Followers, Poor Men's Lawyers, University Extension and other lectures, Study Circles, Concerts, Cripples' Parlour, Boys' Clubs, Girls' Clubs, Holiday School, Play Centre, Country Holidays, Sunday School, Travel Club, Goose Club, Slate Club, and other thrift clubs, Flower Shows and Gardening movement, Boys' Brigade and Scouts. Moreover the Browning Hall Conference on Housing and Locomotion led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on London Traffic and of the London Traffic Branch of the Board of Trade. The appeal of the Settlement on behalf of the victims of involuntary idleness elicited from Royal compassion the Queen's Fund for the Unemployed — the first provision on a national scale of work for the workless. Through the National Pensions Committee, of which it was the cradle and headquarters, it secured the enactment of Old Age Pensions. It has, by its Travel Club abroad and by propaganda at home, become a recognised agent of international

goodwill. By means of Labour Week 1910 and 1911, as well as by the published reports of the speeches in *Labour and Religion* and *Christ and Labour*—of which Danish, German, and American editions are appearing—the Settlement has been employed to promote the evangelisation of the workers of the world.

Over this scene of unceasing service of the poor, amid the unlovely sights and sounds of Walworth, amid the tragic woes of the workless and the over-worked, of the homeless and the hopeless, the memory of the poet and his peerless consort hovers like a cloud of angel faces over a battlefield. Ever engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the forces of poverty and its squalid allies, continually crippled for want of workers and for want of funds, the Settlement has never allowed its throng of other duties to prevent it from rendering recurrent honour to the memory of the name it bears. When the fiftieth anniversary drew near of the most perfect union that ever glorified human marriage, the Settlement suggested, and with the zealous co-operation of the Rev. Canon Barker arranged, the Browning Golden Wedding

celebration in the Church of St. Marylebone, the scene of the original ceremony, when the memorial sermon was preached by Dean Farrar, and Browning verse was sung to rare music. Every year since, the Browning Calendar has been observed at Browning Hall. The birthday of the poet is celebrated by a contest, in the reciting and singing of Browning poetry, between the top boys and top girls of some score of the public elementary schools in the neigbourhood. The interest in this contest has grown from year to year. The insight and interpretative skill, both of the young reciters and of the young singers, have been warmly commended by most competent critics. The anniversary of the wedding is generally the occasion of a musical celebration, when the Browning Love-songs are sung to large and appreciative audiences of working men and women. On several occasions the singers have come from one of our foremost opera companies, who gave their services for love of Browning and the people. In this high way have the youth and maidens of Walworth aptly learned the divine romance of wedded love. The anniversary of the death is kept generally by

Walworth singers and Walworth speakers: but on the first occasion by artistes of the Kyrle Society and the Right Hon. Augustine Birrell. This in the evening. On the morning, the prize-takers in the Browning Birthday Contest proceed to Westminster Abbey, and after matins reverently lay on the tomb of the poet a wreath consisting of bay (for poetry), of laurel (for victory), and of Italian roses (for love and Italy).

Besides these annual celebrations, others occur of more unusual note. Of set design, or by coincidence strangely undesigned, some of the most memorable events in the history of the Settlement have fallen on Browning anniversaries. The Hour of Prayer, at which the Settlement came into being, was unwittingly arranged for the day after Browning's death-day. On the same day four years later, and equally undesigned, came the first conference on Old Age Pensions, which grew so unexpectedly to national dimensions. The old graveyard at the back of the Hall, transformed into Browning Garden, was opened on the eve of the poet's baptismal anniversary in 1898, by the daughter of Colonel John Hay, then American Am-

bassador, who pronounced Browning to be essentially a democrat. On the baptismal anniversary itself in 1902, the Browning Clubhouse, which with the Dale Library of Christian Sociology cost some £6000, was opened by the Right Hon. Charles Booth and the Lord Bishop of Hereford. All unintended by the foundress, Miss Isabel Faraday, the Browning Bethany Homes for the aged at Whyteleafe, which now provide accommodation for 135 old folks, and have been valued at more than £10,000, were founded in the centenary year of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's birth, and were hailed by the late Professor Hall Griffin as a centenary monument that would have appealed most strongly to the heart of the poetess. On the 29th of June 1909 Mrs. Carey gave a cottage to the Homes, and on June 29th, 1910, she gave the Settlement House, which previously had only been held on annual rental: and the anniversary coincidence of the gifts led to the discovery that both had been given on the death-day of the poetess.

It was not till the Settlement had been four years at work, and had as it were won

its spurs, that it approached the son of the poet, and requested that the honour of the name might be given to the new clubhouse. In a charming letter Mr. Barrett Browning replied: "I need scarcely assure you how gratified my father would have been by so much work being done, with so much enthusiasm and unflagging zeal; and I do not hesitate to say that he would most certainly have rejoiced in his heart, and felt honoured indeed by his name being associated with it." With similar grace, Mr. Browning accepted the Presidency of the Settlement in 1906, the centenary year of his mother's birth. In the course of the year he wrote: "My father would have been proud indeed to have his name connected with this cause. He was a fighter, as you know: 'ever a fighter,' as he described himself, and I know his heartiest sympathy would have been with you in the great battle you are fighting." Instead of a Presidential Address, either spoken or written, Mr. Browning presented the Settlement with the portrait bust in marble he made of his father shortly before his death. "It pleased him greatly," he wrote, "and I think would stand appropriately in the hall which

bears his name." On the anniversary of the poet's death, the bust was unveiled in the presence of a distinguished company by Mr. Edmund Gosse. In the course of his oration, Mr. Gosse spoke of the work of the Settlement as carrying out what the poet himself would have desired. In this centenary year, Mr. Browning has again consented to fill the Presidential Chair.

F. Herbert Stead.

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